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TO : The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hilsman
SUBJECT: The Cuban Crisis: Asian Reactions and US Policy

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This paper summarizes and evaluates Asian reactions to the Cuban crisis as they developed up to noon Friday, October 26. It suggests certain policy implications which may become more explicit, depending upon the turn of events in Cuba.

ABSTRACT

As the first week of the Cuban crisis came to a close, Asian Communist reactions remained extremely reserved with virtually no effort to inflate the crisis or to force a Soviet-US confrontation. Free Asian reactions ranged from isolated left-wing criticism of the US position to full support for the President's move, with the majority of opinion, both public and private, generally acquiescing in the US position. The propaganda initiative still remained with the US and in a context favorable to Free World propaganda because of Chinese aggression in India. Second thoughts, however, may increase anti-American pressures, especially in nonaligned countries and from left opposition groups, should the immediate danger of general war seem to pass. US photo intelligence may carry limited weight for unsophisticated Asian audiences. Instead US themes might pre-empt the likely Communist slogan, "Hands Off Cuba!" Stress might be given the failure of Castro's "socialist revolution" compared with USSR clandestine military efforts. Japan might play a useful role in leading Asian opinion, especially nonaligned, toward firmer support for the dismantling of Soviet missile bases.

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COMMUNIST ASIA

Chinese Communist comment on the crisis concentrates on the Cuban-US aspect of the conflict and ignores the possibility of a specific US-Soviet bloc clash.

In news releases on October 23, Peiping noted that the missiles in Cuba were Soviet-supplied and that the US was embargoing further supplies of "surface-to-surface missiles, bomber aircraft, etc." Subsequent commentaries and articles have not repeated this information, however. Peiping implicitly accepts the US charge that at least some equipment on Cuba is offensive by (a) refraining from denying the charge in any of its output, and (b) by arguing the US accusation is merely the "pretext" for the moves taken.

Peiping's government statement October 24 expressed brief support for the Soviet government statement (reprinted in full in People's Daily) but contains no further references to the role of the USSR in the crisis. It asserts, in fact, that "the Cuban people" will be able to overcome the US threat to them; this theme was repeated by Vice-Premier Lo Jui-ch'ing in a speech October 25. The implication seems evident that the Cubans will have to do this alone. A People's Daily editorial October 24 and a Ta Kung Pao editorial the next day omit any reference to the Soviet Union whatsoever. All Peiping commentary strongly emphasizes that the US actions over Cuba illustrate the bellicosity of US imperialism.

There is no hint in any of the published materials of any intended counter-action or program of mass demonstrations by Peiping. The Chinese limit themselves to generalized assurances of support for Cuba by the socialist camp and the assertions noted above that, in the end, the Cuban cause will be victorious. Peiping reprints Khrushchev's letter to Lord Russell.

Comment downplays the specific danger of world war over the Cuban crisis but repeats stock allegations that the US action endangers "peace" in general and in the Caribbean in particular.

North Korean comment, which includes a government statement on October 25, takes a more bellicose tone than that of Peiping (a constitutional characteristic of DPRK literary style) but its overall approach is similar to that of the Chinese. The government statement omits any reference to the Soviet government statement and contains no hint of the issue of offensive missiles or bombers or the origin of this equipment in Cuba. Even general North Korean news coverage of the crisis almost completely ignores the Soviet Union and the Soviet government statement does not appear to have been reprinted.

North Vietnamese propaganda, unlike that from Peiping and Pyongyang, reiterates pledges of "warm support" for the Soviet statement which Hanoi also reprints in full. Hanoi also speaks of the supply of aid to Cuba by "friendly countries" to defend itself, a reference not found in Peiping and DPRK comment.

Significance of Peiping's Position. It is possible Peiping was unaware of the extent of the Soviet commitment in Cuba, particularly regarding the deployment of IRBMs. Since Moscow has consistently refused to supply the Chinese with such weapons, Peiping may have greeted this news with considerable pique. Peiping's treatment of the crisis has been extremely reserved, possibly as a result of this reaction and possibly from a realization of the genuine dangers of thermonuclear war arising from the crisis. The Chinese have shown no signs of pressing the Soviets to adhere to a militant "tit-for-tat" policy in this situation although this slogan was used once in a Peiping commentary. The Chinese position is consistent with their policy of pressing the US hard when it appears the US may be unwilling to take serious risks but of drawing back with caution when the risks appear to mount. Pyongyang's and Hanoi's reactions are relevant primarily as further evidence of their general alignment in terms of Sino-Soviet relations.

NORTHEAST ASIA

JAPAN

The initial Japanese response has on the whole tended to view the United States quarantine as an understandable but disturbing move. The government has largely supported the position taken by the United States. The press, while expressing sympathy, has placed relatively more stress on the risks of the situation and, in general, appears to be unwilling to come down editorially on either side. The Socialist opposition is thoroughly critical of US policy, but does not seem to regard the issue as one which permits all out exploitation. Finally, the fact that there has been little discussion of whether the US action poses direct dangers for Japan suggests that our security ties with Japan have not come into question.

The government, expressing full understanding of the US position, stated on October 24 that Japan considered the Cuban missile bases a menace to American security and to the world balance of power. The government has also publicly minimized the adverse effect of a blockade on Japanese shipping. (Japanese shippers had previously virtually suspended operations to Cuba.) And some Japanese Air Force bases have been alerted in coordination with the US Air Force alert.

On the other hand, the Japanese Government has indicated that the Cuban quarantine is at best a necessary evil. An unofficial Foreign Office statement called the situation "regrettable," and the Japanese ambassador in Washington termed it "serious" and "dangerous".

The government, strongly seconded by the press, has officially expressed the hope that the crisis can be settled in the United Nations.

Most Tokyo papers have deplored the risks involved in the quarantine action, but have emphasized that the Soviet buildup constitutes a threat to the US and that the USSR shares the responsibility to reduce tension. The Asahi said that the US move "may of course be precautionary" but does "involve a dreadful danger." While commenting at length on the need for both the Soviet Union and Cuba to abandon their present course "if the US charges are true," the Asahi added that Soviet excesses would still "not give the United States justification for engaging in the same kind of dangerous excesses." The Mainichi observed that "in principle, Cuba is an independent and sovereign country and therefore the United States cannot interfere" but added that "if an unfriendly neighboring government were to possess offensive intermediate range ballistic missiles, this is a situation that cannot be ignored." The Mainichi concluded, "While able to understand the American feeling, we hope that the United States will act prudently." The Yomiuri declared that the "presence of offensive weapons only a few miles from US shores is emphatically provocative" and that while the Soviets may claim that this is "necessary to deter the

US from invading Cuba, yet by pursuing this policy, Russia is playing with nuclear fire." Having acknowledged this, the Yomiuri warned that "a threat to sink foreign shipping in a time of peace is the height of emotional extravagance." Two papers expressed doubt that the Western European allies would wholeheartedly back the US course, and two speculated that the forthcoming US elections may have played a part in President Kennedy's move.

The Japan Socialist Party, the major opposition, completely ignored the offensive threat posed by the Soviet bases in Cuba. The party admonished the US not to interfere with the domestic affairs of any country regardless of the country's policies and further warned that the air force alert showed that the US-Japan Security Treaty could threaten the peace and security of Japan. The socialists, however, gave no indication that they would make a major issue of the quarantine.

From the standpoint of the US position in Japan, the features absent from the Japanese reaction are perhaps more significant than those noted. Apart from the Socialist statement, there has been no attack on the United States as a reckless and therefore dangerous ally, and no call for reconsideration of Japan's security ties with the US. There has been generalized concern that the situation could evolve into global conflict including Japan, but no preoccupation with an immediate danger to Japan or possible bloc retaliatory measures resulting from the US action.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The ROK Government welcomed President Kennedy's statement on Cuba. Chairman PAK Chong-hui, the central figure of the military government, reaffirmed ROK readiness to support and cooperate with the Free World. He specifically mentioned ROK willingness to support strong US actions elsewhere than in Cuba, probably looking to North Korea. The government also demonstrated support of the US position by ordering ROK forces to the same alert status as the US Forces in Korea.

While a majority of the public probably also supports strong US action it is questionable whether popular feeling may not have some admixture of concern over the possibility of involvement in another major conflict.

It is anticipated that the ROK Mission at the United Nations will support the US by lobbying and representation.

REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The GRC has acclaimed with great enthusiasm the United States quarantine of Cuba. However, even while praising President Kennedy's position, semi-official and press comment suggested that the US action came "a bit too late" and that it should have been more forceful. A radio commentary suggested that the US go one step farther by knocking out the Cuban missile bases and destroying the Castro regime. The United Kingdom was singled out and criticized for opposing the blockade of Cuba.

The GRC Delegation to the United Nations has been instructed to support the US stand. While complete and effective coordination can be anticipated as long as the present state of tension continues, it is believed that the GRC would not be displeased with continued and intensified difficulties between the US and the USSR.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Thailand welcomed the US action as an indication of greater US firmness and vigor and pledged whatever support may be useful. Its UN delegation has been instructed to support the US resolution. Initial press coverage was purely factual but favorable editorial comment is expected.

In South Vietnam both President Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu have expressed approval of President Kennedy's actions, although both expect increased pressures in Southeast Asia as a result of the Cuban developments. On October 26 the GVN Foreign Ministry issued a communique approving the US stand. Reactions in the civil and military hierarchies were also favorable, although there was a tendency to contrast our actions in Cuba with our stand in Laos and to state that a strong US posture toward the Communist Bloc was overdue. Editorials in the Saigon-Cholon Chinese language press were generally approving and described the US action as forceful and decisive. No unusual tension or excitement has been noted in Saigon.

In the Philippines there is strong support, official and unofficial, for the US position and an atmosphere conducive to taking any measures necessary to bolster the Philippine military position. President Diosdado Macapagal cabled President Kennedy that "the Philippines supports this action, as well as any other action, to repel any threat to peace or any act of aggression by which the Communist powers propose to achieve their goal of world domination." The Philippine UN Delegation was instructed to support the US resolution.

In a minor note of dissent, a leader of a small labor party, urged his organization to adopt a neutral policy in the Cuban crisis.

In a speech to Parliament Australia's Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies praised US actions as outlined in the President's speech. He stressed that the Soviet Union needed to demonstrate its sincerity and peaceful intent by promptly abandoning its policies in Cuba. The Australian Delegation to the UN has been instructed to support the US resolution in the Security Council. Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell of the Australian Labor Party was somewhat critical in his remarks about the President's speech. He deplored the possibility of war over Cuba, but did remark that no sensible person would wish to see the extension of nuclear bases anywhere. The Labor Party in due course may argue that the crisis is as much the product of US actions and hysteria as of Soviet intrusion in the Western hemisphere.

New Zealand's Prime Minister Keith Holyoake in a statement issued on October 23 expressed shock that the Communists had established offensive nuclear sites in Cuba. He stated that the Soviets have it in their power to determine whether an already dangerous situation assumes desperate dimensions. He assured his people that the President had borne in mind not only the security of the US but also that of the whole Western world, and expressed gratification that the issue was placed before the UN. The New Zealand Labor Party has not yet commented.

No official response has been received from Malaya. Malayan officials, in general, have shown little interest. The Malayan ambassador at the UN, however, has defended the US position among the Afro-Asian delegates.

In Singapore there was little comprehension of the issue and its ramifications. The Chinese, in particular, were initially more concerned with internal problems and the Sino-Indian conflict, but later reactions indicated general Chinese disapproval of the US action.

The initial reaction in Burma was one of bewilderment and fear -- fear that the US and the USSR were going to war over Cuba. RGUB reaction has been restrained and limited to technical questions concerning the quarantine. Official Burmese reaction, if any, is awaiting General Ne Win's estimate of the situation. It is likely to avoid attacks upon the US, the USSR, or Cuba and to concentrate on the necessity for peaceful negotiations between the Powers and the avoidance meanwhile of any violence or confrontation leading to war. Press reaction has been predictably split along political lines -- pro-communist papers bitterly attacking the US; neutralists avoiding the issues and concentrating on negotiations to avert general war; and anti-communist papers supporting the US action.

The Burmese public, as well as the press, appears more interested in the Sino-Indian border crisis than in Cuba. Some members of the "educated elite" have expressed approval of the US action and there is even a feeling of its being "long overdue." By and large the public will probably be with us on the issue.

Cambodian reaction has been even more limited than Burmese reaction. Official reaction awaits an announcement from Prince Sihanouk, who is informed on the matter but has not yet spoken publicly about it. However, the Cambodian radio announced October 25 that Cambodia and Cuba will establish diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level. The timing of this announcement, although the decision allegedly was made three weeks ago, may be a significant indication of Sihanouk's attitude. Furthermore a Cambodian National Radio newscast October 24 veered towards ascribing the tension to the American blockade of Cuba rather than to the presence of Soviet missiles on that island. It is now a distinct possibility that Sihanouk will deplore the US blockade of Cuba. He will probably call for immediate talks between the US and the USSR to avoid war and for a suspension of actions on either side held likely to inflame the situation further.

The Cambodian press has generally limited itself to printing the bald facts thus far, except for the extreme left-wing press which is attacking the US. We have no reaction from the public.

In Indonesia President Sukarno has continued to follow the pattern of the last month during which he has avoided taking a stand on the Cuban situation, even neglecting to answer a Castro note asking for Indonesian support. On October 25 the Indonesian government called on the governments of the US and the USSR to resolve their differences and avoid an armed conflict. A government

spokesman announced that an official statement on Cuba would be released soon.

The press has generally covered developments fully, but only the nationalist newspaper Merdeka, which often acts as a semi-official organ of the government, was immediately sympathetic to Cuba. The other pro-government newspapers continue to wait for official guidance before commenting on the issue although one of these was reported to have expressed sympathy with the United States. After a day of editorial silence, the communist and left-wing press finally accused the US of dragging the world to the edge of war.

In Laos Souvanna Phouma informed our Ambassador that the cabinet had not taken a position on the Cuban issue and that the Lao delegation to the United Nations would be instructed to abstain in any vote taken on the issue in the General Assembly.

Implications for U.S. As the first week of the Cuban crisis came to a close, Far Eastern reactions remained largely unstructured, at the worst, or inclined to support the President's move. This suggests that considerable opportunity remains for building favorable attitudes and sustaining the political information initiative to the disadvantage of the Sino-Soviet bloc. The environment is auspicious for intensive efforts in this regard. Soviet nuclear testing has eliminated a major basis of anti-American, left-wing appeal in Japan. Chinese military action on the Indian border provides immediate and dramatic evidence of Communist aggression, posing a parallel threat to Asians which makes increasingly understandable US concern over Soviet military moves in Cuba. We have complied with the Geneva Agreements on Laos, withdrawing our forces and inviting inspection. The Communists have stalled and evaded, proving that only firmness plus inspection can guarantee their observance of agreements. Our position in Indonesia is better than at any time since Indonesia's winning of independence, thanks to our resolution of the West Irian dispute without imposing or permitting the use of force. Finally, US behavior in the Taiwan Strait crisis, Laos, and South Viet Nam, with its mixture of firmness with responsibility, provides a credible framework within which to reassure Asians of our determination to halt Communist aggression without plunging the world into a thermo-nuclear disaster.

Second thoughts may well follow the honeymoon period of passive acceptance of US moves. Should the genuine danger of general war seem to be less immediate, neutralist delegations to the UN and left-wing groups in home countries may fall into a familiar pattern of criticizing US "provocative" moves while remaining silent on Soviet intransigence or belligerence. A combined Sino-Soviet propaganda offensive may be mounted through Communist Parties and front organizations. Pre-emption of their "Hands Off Cuba" slogan by US propaganda might turn this traditional anti-US appeal against Moscow. Full publicity for Soviet missiles may help in urban areas, but Asian ignorance about missiles, their appearance, and their strategic implications, does not make this ploy too promising. Most telling, perhaps, would be attention to the economic disasters that have befallen Cuba, combined with general emphasis on the transformation of this "socialist revolution" into little more than an advanced military base for Soviet aggression.

A key reaction is likely to be that of Japan, both because of Japan's strategic importance to the US and because the position Japan takes will to some extent influence other Asians. Japan might be especially helpful in persuading nonaligned Asian governments to see the need for the physical removal of Soviet missile bases, offsetting the tendency of Afro-Asian UN delegations to rest content with verbal assurances and diplomatic guarantees of good faith. The problem is one of translating a seemingly local problem, involving at the most

the Western Hemisphere, into a global problem which involves the interests and the security of all countries. Communist efforts to keep the issue primarily a US-Cuban affair must be countered by insistence that global security depends on US success in checkmating the secret expansion of Soviet missile bases designed to paralyze the heartland of Free World military strength.

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